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**Title :** Proposed standardized methodology for the Neotropical otter (*Lontra longicaudis*) occurrence and species monitoring, in Custodio Dam (Ouro Preto) in the state of Minas Gerais, Southern Brazil

**Category :** Conservation

**Student :** M.A./M.S.

**Preferred Format :** Poster Presentation

**Abstract :** *Lontra longicaudis* studies in Brazil lack studies in respect to the occurrence and distribution of the species. Our objective was to develop a standardized methodology to be used in verifying the occurrence of otter. In conjunction, we monitored the activity of otter in a dam during the period of water release, from June to November of 2002. Seven bodies of water were selected for investigation of possible otter occurrence. The 7 sites selected were divided into intervals of 5Km, being that the first three intervals were disregarded and remaining ones actively investigated. A site was determined positive for otter presence if any evidence of otter habitation was confirmed (feces, scrapes, tracks). GPS points were collected for the start and end points of each site, as well as for locations that yielded positive for otters. At the Dam, the entire length was surveyed twice a month (12 sessions). Of all the intervals surveyed for the occurrence study, 5 were considered positive. The first and last signs were found respectively at a mean distance of 392 m (92-761m) and 1,295.8m (576-1,747m) from the interval starting point. A mean of 3.8 locations were found per interval surveyed. We observed a relative tolerance to the degradation of shoreline vegetation, although intervals highly degraded were not used by the species during the study period. We recommend for future otter studies a minimum interval length of 2Km and it should also be repeated during different times of the year. Our study encountered 32 fecal samples at Dam, being that frequency of encounter was inversely related to the water level of the reservoir. During this period an increase in use of the area by people and domestic animals occurred. Although the dam was not used effectively for neither marking nor, most likely, feeding as well.